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Saving Lives Through Vaccination

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Hospitalman Christian Snyder, assigned to Naval Hospital (NH) Jacksonville's Maternal Infant Unit, sterilizes the skin of 11-month old Cameron Kee prior to administering an annual influenza (flu) vaccination. It is recommended that everyone age six months and older get an annual flu vaccination. (U.S. Navy photo by Jacob Sippel, Naval Hospital Jacksonville Public Affairs/Released)

National Infant Immunization Week is April 26 – May 3. It is a week set aside to help parents understand the importance of protecting infants and toddlers from vaccine-preventable diseases.

There are numerous myths and misinformation about vaccine safety that can often confuse parents. The bottom line: vaccines save lives.

Before a vaccine is licensed, it undergoes years of testing by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration and is continually monitored for its safety and effectiveness. While vaccines can cause side effects, the benefits of getting vaccines far outweigh possible side effects for almost all children.

Vaccines can protect your infants and children from 14 diseases. And thanks to vaccines, some diseases in the United States are almost gone. The elimination of polio and smallpox in the U.S. are powerful examples of why we vaccinate.

When it comes to saving money, immunizations can do just that. Children with vaccine-

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preventable diseases may not be allowed to attend school or daycare, and in some cases these diseases require hospitalizations that could result in permanent disabilities, ultimately causing a financial burden for you and your family.

By immunizing our infants, some of today’s diseases will no longer be around to harm our children ... our grandchildren ... and their grandchildren.

What happens if we stop vaccinating? We would remove the protection that we have built through years of vaccinations. And eventually more and more people would become infected with disease, spread diseases to others and many may die, undoing the progress we have made over the years.

Vaccine-preventable diseases still circulate around the world, including in the U.S. Even when rare in the U.S., diseases can be brought into the country, putting unvaccinated children at risk.

Currently, the U.S. has the safest, most effective vaccine supply in its history. Its long-standing vaccine safety system ensures that vaccines are as safe as possible. And as new information and science become available, our system will continue to be updated and improved.

Immunization is a shared responsibility. Families, we as health care professionals and public health officials must work together to help protect our communities.

Parents, talk to your child’s primary care manager to ensure their immunizations are up-to-date. Vaccinate; it’s the single best way to be protected.

For more reasons to vaccinate, go to <http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines> or call 1-800-CDC-INFO.

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